(e) by when the above conversion work is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Estimated cost of the project is Rs. 286 cr.

(c) Budget outlay for 2000-2001 is Rs. 10 cr.

(d) and (e) The work has been taken up in phases. Work on Solapur-Hotgi and Hotgi-Bijapur sections has been completed and commissioned. Work on the remaining section is presently in progress and will be completed in the coming years as per availability of resources.

Railway Bridge Over Ganga

1398. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to refer to answer to Starred Question 198, given in the Rajya Sabha on the 4th August, 2000 and state:

(a) whether the proposal for construction of a railway bridge across River Ganga between Patna and Sonepur has since been processed for requisite clearances;

(b) whether the construction work has also been taken up and the provision of Rs. five crores, made during the current financial year, would be utilised; and

(c) if the answer to parts (a) and (b) above be in negative, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) The project will be processed for clearances once the final location survey and model studies are completed and the report with firm cost becomes available.

About Rs. 40 lakh will be used during the current year for the survey work now in progress. The rest of the money can be used only if the clearances become available within this financial year.

Cycle/scooter stand contract at Ludhiana Railway Station

1399. SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Northern Railway had invited tenders for allotment of cycle/ scooter stand contract at Ludhiana Railway Station this year;

(b) if so, what procedure was adopted in awarding the contract;

(c) whether tender was re-advertised due to non-availability of suitable contractor in the first advertisement;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) whether the contractor who received the contract, has further sublet the contract at higher price, thus violating the terms of the contract, if so, the action taken or proposed to be taken against the contractor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (d) A tender was advertised in April 2000 for allotment of cycle/scooter stand contract at Ludhiana Railway Station. However, the tender was discharged due to less offer quoted by the bidder as compared to the revised parking charges approved by the Administration in May, 2000. The tender was re-advertised to fetch reasonable amount.

(e) No, Sir.

Railways Communication Network

1400. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the railways are on the threshold of providing the country a parallel communication highway of millions of voice and data transmission channels with vast expansion by the OFC facility;

(b) whether it is also a fact that a Railtel Corporation of India has already been set up for the purpose and the total long-distance communication market is estimated at Rs. 10,000 crore annually;

(c) if so, how Government propose to arrange the huge finances; and

(d) how much cheap the communication network would be for vast rural and remote areas in the years to come?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Railways have decided to build a nation-wide broad band and multimedia network by laying Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) along Railway Track by utilising Railway's right of way through the medium of a professionally managed corporation. After Cabinet's approval, the corporation under Ministry of Railways has been formed. The corporation has been registered with the Registrar of Companies as Railtel Corporation of India Ltd. (RCIL).

(c) and (d) A consultant has been appointed to prepare business plan for the corporation. Decision regarding Financing and costing would be taken after submission of business plan by the consultant.